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July 18, 1972

Jewish, Christian Educators Urge Dialogue Involving Laity

LITTLE SWITZERLAND, N. C. (BP)--More than 50 Christians and Jews listened intently as a Protestant educator told of the German occupation of his native country, the Netherlands; his father's efforts to aid Jews escape from Hitler's Gestapo; and his own imprisonment by the Germans.

"I am telling you this because the battle fought and won for the Jewish people in 1946 has not really been won, and if we're not careful, we might lose it," said Gerrit Tenzythoff, head of the department of religious studies at Southwest Missouri State College, Springfield, Mo.

Tenzythoff addressed more than 50 Jewish and Christian University professors attending a seminar jointly sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of inter-faith witness, and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Although co-sponsored by Southern Baptists, eight Christian faiths were represented at the six-day seminar, including Catholic, Reformed Church of America, Church of the Brethren, United Methodists, Church of God of Prophecy, Episcopalian, and American, Canadian and Irish Presbyterians.

The seminar provided practical suggestions for teaching Judaic studies in higher education, as well as an awareness of Jewish and Christian traditions and cultures.

Out of the meeting, the Jewish and Christian educators called for more dialogue between the laity of the two religious faiths.

"Very important conversations have begun here," said M. Thomas Starkes of Atlanta, secretary of the SBC Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness.

"Action is being planned," Starkes added. As a beginning, a series of Jewish-Baptist lay conferences has been projected this fall in Atlanta.

Participants in the conference here viewed interest in Baptist-Jewish dialogues for the laity as encouraging.

Ira Craft a layman from Columbia, S. C., said, "We are anxious to bring a conference such as this down to a laymen's level."

"If 15 or 20 Jewish and Christian couples could meet together, it would establish the kind of environment where I could go up to any Rabbi in my community and tell him what Christ means in my life without him feeling I was trying to convert him," Craft said.

Starkes pointed to two resolutions adopted by Southern Baptists recently as positive signs toward improved Judeo-Christian Relations.

In April, the presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, American Baptist Convention, and National Baptist Convention, Inc., issued a joint statement regarding the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union.

In June, Southern Baptists in their annual national convention passed a resolution on anti-Semitism. The resolution stated: "This convention goes on record as opposed to any and all forms of anti-Semitism...and that we pledge ourselves to combat anti-Semitism in every way."

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honorable, Christian way." It was the second year in a row the SBC had adopted such a resolution.

Starkes called the two resolutions "part of a new awareness of Southern Baptists of the problem anti-Semitism.

"Awareness comes before action," he added.

Rabbi Solomon S. Bernards, the Anti-Defamation League's national director of interreligious cooperation, pointed out that "during the conference, Jews and Christians had an exchange of ideas regarding the common ground and paths which interest them.

"These came in several interchanges," Bernards said. "We did not gloss over any differences, but accepted each other while very clearly deliniating the things in our own respective positions. At the same time, we created great insight into one another's tradition so that in our teaching, preaching and educating we can be much fairer to each other.

"We can accept the belief in the worth of our own commitment and at the same time accept the validity of the other person's culture, heritage and stance," Bernards stated.

He warned against the evasion of Jewish-Christian issues by educators and their institutions.

"We have discovered it is not sufficient for teachers to avoid the obvious misconceptions that have been a part of the heritage of western culture," he said. "We must make a very conscious effort to build awareness of the Jewish community, its culture and life style."

At least one Rabbi will be studying the Christian tradition as a result of the conference. On the last night of the conference, Rabbi Ivan Caine, who had led sessions of Judiac studies at the seminar, said: "I've resolved to read and study the New Testament in its setting. I will not be able to put this off any longer."

Caine, chairman and professor of the department of Biblical civilization at the Jewish Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Philadelphia, warned that "If we ever get into the sin of treating today's criticism as gospel, then we are chaining ourselves into today's structure."

On the Jewish Sabbath, conference participants held a joint worship service. On Sunday, they worshiped together in another joint service. For many, Starkes said, the two worship experiences were the highlight of the seminar.

"Years from now you will probably see results of this conference. For professors who participated will still be profiting from it," Starkes said.

He added that in many cases continuing dialogue was begun. "One of the Rabbis even asked one of the featured Protestant speakers to come to his Synagogue to preach," he concluded.

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13,153 Messengers Attend SBC;
North Carolina Tops State List

NASHVILLE (BP)--Final registration figures for the Southern Baptist Convention in Philadelphia were tallied here, with a total of 13,153 messengers registered for the convention.

Attendance ranked ninth in the records of the convention. Record high was the 1969 convention in New Orleans, with 16,678 messengers registered.

In the state by state tally, North Carolina ranked first in the number of messengers attending the 1972 meeting in Philadelphia, with 1,398 registered.

Close behind were Texas, 1,058; South Carolina, 1,052; Georgia, 1,046; Virginia, 999; Tennessee, 952; and Alabama, 936.

Others, in order, were: Mississippi, 728; Kentucky, 716; Florida, 572; Missouri, 548;

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Maryland, 497; Louisiana, 442; Oklahoma, 396; and Ohio, 245.

Also, Arkansas, 241; Illinois, 213; Pennsylvania-South Jersey, 199; Indiana, 127; New York, 127; California, 118; District of Columbia, 117.

Others, each with less than 100 (listed alphabetically), included: Alaska, 2; Arizona, 31; Colorado, 34; Connecticut, 19; Delaware, 30; Hawaii, 7; Iowa, 6; Kansas-Nebraska, 56; Maine, 3; Massachusetts, 13; Michigan, 76; New Jersey, 12.

New Mexico, 53; Northern Plains Convention, 16; Oregon-Washington, 10; Rhode Island, 11; Utah-Idaho, 3; West Virginia, 41; Puerto Rico, 1; and Canal Zone, 2.

The 13,153 registered messengers ranked ninth in attendance, behind the 1969 New Orleans meeting; the 1965 Dallas session (16,053); the 1968 Houston meeting (16,071); the 1967 session in Miami Beach (14,794); 1971 in St. Louis (13,716); 1970 in Denver (13,692); and 1964 session in Atlantic City, (13,163).

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CORRECTION

On story mailed 7-17-72, headlined, "First HMB Summer '72 Seminar Ends in S. C.," please change dateline to read: GREENVILLE, S. C. (BP)--, rather than Greenville, N. C., as sent. Thanks.

--Baptist Press



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